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Education
Government Services
January 7, 2008

Focus on School Maintenance Evident Across Newfoundland and Labrador

Millions of dollars and a focus on regular maintenance are having a positive impact on school buildings across the province, says the Honourable Joan Burke, Minister of Education.

"So often, it's only the big construction projects that make the news, but every day, projects are being tendered throughout the province that are making schools healthy and safe," said Minister Burke. "From oil tank removals to window replacements, and from electrical upgrades to masonry repairs, $25 million has been spent since 2004 to provide the best learning environments for students and teachers."

Minister Burke said this fiscal year alone, 40 roof repair or replacement projects have been funded. Leaky roofs and windows are the number one contributor to poor air quality and as a result, the Provincial Government has made roof repairs and general maintenance key priority areas. In fact, since 2004, 200 roofing, siding, windows and brick projects have been approved. As a result, classes in places like St. Lewis, Pilley's Island, Milltown and Woody Point are taking place under newly repaired roofs.

To ensure problem areas are identified before they develop into major issues, an enhanced school inspection program has also begun. The Department of Education is working with school boards and the Department of Government Services to identify schools where these enhanced inspections should be carried out on a priority basis. To date, 26 schools have been reviewed and action plans have been developed to address the issues identified. Work has already been completed on some projects, while others are on-going.

"The enhanced school inspection program is a more comprehensive version of our already existing annual inspection process for schools and will become the norm," said the Honourable Kevin O'Brien, Minister of Government Services. "These enhanced inspections proactively identify areas that could cause potential air quality issues. Inspectors conduct exterior and interior assessments as well as meet with the school principal and maintenance staff to discuss any ongoing issues. It is important to address potential problems in this manner before they become major air quality issues to ensure students and teachers can learn and work in a clean and safe environment."

Minister Burke said that while unprecedented funding has been allocated to repair long-standing problems, a key part of providing safe, healthy schools is on-going maintenance. "Just as a home requires basic repairs and cleaning for upkeep, so do our schools," said Minister Burke. "This year, the Provincial Government increased operating grants to school boards by 67 per cent at an annual cost of $4.2 million. This means schools will have extra funds to address regular maintenance issues. By doing so, they are able to deal with small problems before they become big ones.

"The Provincial Government is spending more than $1 billion on education this year, with a focus on healthy and safe learning environments, as well as the other cornerstones of our education system, such as resources, teachers and advanced technology. Because of this, we are experiencing an extremely exciting and productive period in every school district in the province, with new opportunities for our students in safe, healthy schools," the minister said.

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2008 01 07 10:20 a.m.

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